

**CITY OF MESA
MINUTES OF THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING**

DATE: September 18, 2008 **TIME:** 7:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeff Jarvis, Chair
Steve Chucri
Kari Cluff
Linda Flick
Gregory Holtz
Vern Mathern
Dean Taylor

STAFF PRESENT

Shelly Allen
Sue Cason
Patrick Murphy
Jodi Sorrell

OTHERS PRESENT

Wulf Grote
Marc Soronson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Adam Decker, Vice Chair
Gary Gallagher

1. Call to Order

The September 18, 2008 meeting of the Downtown Development Committee was called to order at 7:30 a.m. at the City Council Chambers, Upper Level 57 E. First Street by Chair Jeff Jarvis.

2. Approval of Minutes of the August 21, 2008 Meeting.

It was moved by Linda Flick and seconded by Dean Taylor to approve the minutes of August 21, 2008.

Vote: 6 in favor
 0 opposed

3. Consider and Take Action on Special Use Permit Case No. ZA08-070TC for the proposed MACfest located on the sidewalks within the Pedestrian Overlay Area (POA). The boundaries of the POA are 1st Avenue to the south, 1st Street to the north, Country Club Drive to the west, and Centennial Way/Sirrine to the east.

Mr. Patrick Murphy stated that this application is for a Special Use Permit to allow MACfest, a proposed arts festival, to be located on the sidewalks within the Pedestrian Overlay Area (POA). Local artists will be displaying their original, quality handmade arts and crafts.

Since MACfest is being held on the sidewalks, an access of 5' to 6' pathway will be maintained for pedestrians. The artists will have their booths located within the portion of the sidewalk between the maintained accessway and the curb. The Main Street streetscape improvements were designed to provide wider pedestrian sidewalks with this type of event in mind.

The goal of MACfest is to help revitalize downtown, to support the downtown merchants, to offer the artists a place to show their work at an affordable price, and to build a sense of community in Mesa. MACfest will occur every Saturday from the beginning of October to the end of May starting at 10:00 a.m. and continuing until 4:00 p.m. The MACfest event will be coordinated with the Mesa Arts Center.

A flyer was sent to the property and business owners located within three hundred feet (300') of the Pedestrian Overlay Area as part of the Citizen Participation process. A public hearing was also advertised for this project in compliance with the City of Mesa's Zoning Ordinance. Staff has not received any calls in opposition to MACfest. Staff is recommending approval of the Special Use Permit subject to six stated stipulations.

Mr. Vern Mathern abstained from voting on this item due to a conflict of interest.

It was moved by Steve Chucuri and seconded by Dean Taylor to recommend approval of a Special Use Permit Case No. ZA08-07TC for the proposed MACfest located on the sidewalks within the Pedestrian Overlay Area (POA). The boundaries of the POA are 1st Avenue to the south, 1st Street to the north, Country Club Drive to the west, and Centennial Way/Sirrine to the east subject to the following stipulations:

- 1. Compliance with all health, building, fire safety, and tax and licensing regulations of the City of Mesa.**
- 2. Compliance with the aerial/site plan, and narrative labeled Exhibit No. 2, which delineates the basic layout of the MACfest.**
- 3. Compliance with the Good Neighbor Policy labeled Exhibit No. 3.**
- 4. Only a washable chalk, or permanent markings approved by the Town Center Development Office, shall be used to outline the location of the vendor area on the sidewalk.**
- 5. The City shall reserve the right to make necessary adjustments to the Special Use Permit or the site plan to ensure pedestrian safety and that the landscaping is properly maintained.**
- 6. The SUP shall expire on September 23, 2009.**

**Vote: 5 in favor, 1 abstain
0 opposed**

4. Central Mesa High Capacity Transit Alternative Analysis Tier II Evaluation Update.

Ms. Jodi Sorrell, Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator for the City of Mesa Transportation Department, stated that eighteen (18) months ago an Alternative Analysis Study was started to determine high capacity transit alternatives for Main Street. The presentation today is to inform the Downtown Development Committee the Tier II results prior to starting the public meetings later next month. Ms. Sorrell introduced Mr. Wulf Grote, Metro's Director of Project Management, and Mr. Marc Soronson, Metro's Project Manager.

Mr. Grote stated that Metro is developing a fifty seven (57) mile High Capacity Transit System. The first twenty (20) miles of the Light Rail Transit is due to open on December 27, 2008. The Central Mesa project is to extend a High Capacity Transit system another three (3) miles to downtown Mesa with a completion date of 2015. The extension for Central Mesa will be funded by Proposition 400 that was passed in 2004, and also a share of Federal funds.

One of the elements of the Alternative Analysis Tier II study is to define the technology or mode of transportation. The three (3) modes to be considered are Light Rail Transit (LRT), Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), or a Baseline Bus with more buses on the streets. The second element of the study is to define the specific route of the transit system. Once the route is defined, the station locations will be determined.

A staff recommendation will be presented by the first of 2009 outlining the final dedicated alignment and technology formulated from the technical evaluation as well as the community input received from the October community meetings. The staff recommendation will then go through another public review, including City boards and committees, probably around February or March 2009 before going to City Council for a formal vote. Once the City Council approves a recommendation, the recommendation goes to Metro Board of Directors as well as the Maricopa Association of Governments Regional Council to update the regional transportation plan.

Mr. Soronson said that during the Tier I portion of the analysis, Metro was concentrating on the alignment of the proposed extension of the transit system from Sycamore east to Horne. In the Tier II analysis the focus has been Main Street between Sycamore and Country Club Drive and three (3) alternatives through downtown Mesa. A great deal of time and effort has been spent talking with the public. Metro is working with a firm to help them understand economic development opportunities and creating a market analysis for the different technologies. More environmental work and further details on engineering will also be done in order to formulate the project into a new starts report to present to the Federal Transit Administration to consider for funding.

Mr. Soronson stated the powerpoint presentation will focus on design, economic potential, capital costs and ridership. More effort has been spent on the downtown evaluation to understand the alternatives, such as what would the impacts be concerning on-street parking, curbs, bicycle lanes and any of the pedestrian amenities currently in the Downtown Area. Metro has also spent immeasurable time with the property owners and tenants along Main Street to understand their concerns which focus mainly around construction impacts and business interruption. All the alternatives being studied do not infringe beyond the curb, the alternatives are between the curbs.

The Tier II Analysis is expected to go to City Council in the first quarter of 2009 with the locally preferred alternative. There are six (6) alternatives to this study. All of the alternatives include Sycamore to Country Club, and then different alternatives for the LRT on First Street and First Avenue from Country Club to Horne. Two end-of-line station locations are being considered due to some issues at the end of the line at Mesa Drive. There seems to be no ideal locations for a park and ride lot at Mesa Drive. The other location would be at Horne which provides a better opportunity for a park and ride lot and also keeps the park and ride out of the Town Center.

These are the Tier II Alternatives;

- Sycamore to Horne/Mesa Drive.
 - BRT Main Street – 2 Lane
 - BRT Main Street – 4 Lane
 - LRT Main Street – 2 Lane
 - LRT Main Street – 4 Lane
 - LRT 1st Street
 - LRT 1st Avenue
- Mesa Drive or Horne to Superstition Springs Center
 - Skip-Stop Express BRT

The BRT alternative would be operating in the center of the street instead of LRT from Sycamore and Country Club with two lanes of traffic in each direction. In the Town Center Area there would be one lane of traffic in each direction from Country Club to Mesa Drive or Horne. Stations and a bus guide-way would be in the middle of the street, with one lane of traffic on each side along with a bicycle lane and on street parking. All new buses would need to be ordered with doors on the left side as almost all buses have doors on the right side.

Another alternative to alleviate any impacts to the Downtown Area would be to assume the BRT program that will start operating at the end of the year when LRT opens to remain exactly the same. The buses would transition at approximately Country Club to the outside lane throughout the Downtown to Superstition Springs Mall.

There are four (4) LRT alternatives that are being considered. The first alternative is similar to the BRT in that the LRT would continue from the Sycamore station all the way to Horne in the middle of the street. As with the BRT alternative there would be two (2) lanes of traffic in each direction from Sycamore to Country Club, then transition to one (1) lane of traffic in each direction from Country Club to Mesa Drive or Horne. This alternative allows the bicycle lane, the on-street parking and curbs to remain where they are. From an engineering viewpoint, this would be the easiest alternative, and staff also has been in concurrence with this viewpoint.

Alternative two is exactly the same as alternative one, except in the Downtown Area from Country Club to Mesa Drive, there would be two (2) lanes of traffic in each direction instead of one (1) lane of traffic in each direction. The bicycle lane would be removed. The on-street parking would be removed from the areas where the stations would be located. With these two alternatives a station would be located near the Mesa Arts Center and east of Mesa Drive. The park and ride stations would be located at Alma School and Horne.

The 1st Street alternative is the same between Sycamore and Country Club. However, just east of Country Club the alignment would transition northbound at Morris and then east on to 1st Street. This alternative for LRT will be the most expensive due to the property that is needed to be required to transition from Morris to 1st Street. The LRT would be in the center of the street with one (1) lane of traffic in each direction and on-street parking. The stations would be located at Centennial Way, Mesa Drive and Horne.

The 1st Avenue alternative mirrors the 1st Street alignment except that the transition onto Morris is in a public right-of-way with very little property needed to be required to make the turn southbound onto Morris and then east on 1st Avenue. The parking located in the front of a small retail strip center on Morris would be removed as that is a City right-of-way, but there is concern that the removal of the parking could impact the businesses. This alternative is number two as far as cost with Main Street being the least expensive. Some of the stakeholders along 1st Avenue have concerns, especially the Tribune due to the number of trucks coming and going for deliveries, and how a center median alignment would impact the left turns in and out of the driveway to the building.

Metro is also working with the State Historic Preservation Office concerning historic properties along the alignment, particularly related to buildings such as The Landmark Restaurant and Laredo Army Surplus Store at Main and Extension. There should not be any impact to these two buildings other than needing some property to the north of The Landmark Restaurant. The State Historic Preservation Office is concerned with any removal of the electric lighting that is located in the center of Main Street. However, Metro feels that they can utilize the poles for both lighting and the overhead system for the LRT.

Case studies of some of our peer cities that have developed mass transit systems have been conducted to evaluate whether rail has had a positive or negative impact

on residential, office and retail property values. Dallas is a better example of a peer city as their land-use patterns are similar to Mesa's. Within a ¼ mile walking distance of the rail stations, there has been a property appreciation for residential, office and retail. The Plano, TX station which is about ten (10) miles from the Dallas center has had a very positive impact on their downtown area.

The estimated capital costs are preliminary and are presented in a range. The BRT alternative is the lesser cost of approximately \$50 million to \$60million dollars depending on the alternative. The LRT alternative for Main Street is the lesser cost of \$185 million to \$225 million dollars to Horne. The cost of the 1st Avenue alternative is between \$225 million to \$234 million dollars. The most expensive alternative is 1st Street at the cost of \$234 million to \$243 million dollars.

The ridership estimates for the three and one half (31/2) miles of the extension is double on the LRT alternative as to the BRT alternative, with the 1st Avenue ridership slightly higher due to the amount of zero car households in the areas to the south of the Town Center.

The schedule for the Tier II Study is as follows:

- Public Meetings – October 2008
- Mesa City Council – October 2008
- Final Definition of Alternatives – October–November 2008
- Locally Preferred Alternative – March–April 2009
- Advance Conceptual Engineering – 2009–2010
- Start Preliminary Engineering – July 2010

Ms. Linda Flick asked the location and what affect the loss of some parking would be on Main Street.

Mr. Soronson replied that since the stations are located in the middle of the street, three or four parking spaces would be eliminated around the stations due to the track having to bow out in that area. One station will be located just east of Country Club and one in front of the Mesa Arts Center.

Mr. Jeff Jarvis asked what the pattern of economic development is based on BRT versus LRT.

Mr. Soronson stated that Metro has not found any answers to that question except from two BRT projects. One project is the Silverline in Boston with many different land-use patterns and activity centers that are served. The other project is the Orangeline in Los Angeles, which was an abandoned railway right-a-way that LA Metro converted into a two-way bus-way, and then connects with the end-of-the-line metro station at North Hollywood. The results have been a lot less active than what can be documented with LRT.

Mr. Jarvis stated that LRT has a history of solving traffic, congestion and mobility problems, and simultaneously bringing economic development.

Mr. Soronson replied that Metro has seen about \$6 billion dollars of investment along the twenty (20) miles before the LRT has even opened.

Mr. Jarvis stated that Mesa has been trying to bring more activity downtown with some success with the Mesa Arts Center, and feels that light rail is the great potential to turn around the Downtown Area.

Mr. Soronson replied that light rail certainly offers some connectivity and potential for economic development opportunities. Some of the property owners that are supporting the Main Street alternative are very interested in redeveloping their properties and to offer residential opportunities on the second floor of their buildings.

Mr. Grote stated that a town near Portland, OR chose to stop the light rail just outside of their downtown area. While the area around the end-of-line station experienced economic development, the downtown area did not receive that benefit. In contrast, the Plano, TX downtown area experienced a great deal of economic development activities with the light rail running through the downtown area.

Mr. Jarvis stated that he is in favor of the LRT down Main Street.

5. Director's Report, Shelly Allen, Assistant Economic Development Department Director

1. Recently Gaylord and DMB made an announcement for the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Area. Gaylord is a resort/entertainment venue which is planning 1,200 rooms with 225,000 square feet of indoor conference space located on 49 acres with a Tom Fazio designed 18-hole golf course. There are no sales tax rebates and no general funds used for this project. The growth will pay for itself with property tax reductions using a GPLET (Government Property Lease Excise Tax), and also 1% of the bed tax will be directed to a non-profit to help with tourism throughout the Gateway Area. Then a 2% of the bed tax will be returned to Gaylord to promote tourism.
2. Embraer at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway had a ribbon cutting ceremony on September 15. Embraer is a service facility for light aircraft jets.
3. ASU Polytechnic had a grand opening of two new buildings.
4. The three Downtown Mesa museums, Mesa Contemporary Arts, Arizona Museum of Natural History, and Arizona Museum for Youth are offering free admission from noon to 5:00 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month starting on October 5. Also the opening of the Mesa Story Telling Festival is on September 23.
5. Banner Desert is having a 35 year celebration.
6. MCC is having an opening ceremony for the new Physical Science Building.

6. Items from Citizens Present (No discussion or action can be taken)

No citizens were present.

9. Adjournment

With there being no further business, this meeting of the Downtown Development Committee adjourned at 8:10 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shelly Allen, Assistant Economic Development Department Director
Minutes prepared by Sue Cason